

IMPROVEMENTS IN FOOTWEAR PACKAGING

This invention relates to footwear packaging, that is to say packaging for boots, shoes, slippers, moccasins, pumps, mules, and like items.

Conventionally, footwear is delivered to retail outlets packed, by the pair, in boxes which are of a standard, uniform size. In most instances the shoes are stored in the boxes until they are sold on to a customer, at which point the boxes are discarded or given to the customer.

This traditional packaging format may be satisfactory for specialist shoe retailers, but it is not convenient for other retailers, for example high-street fashion retailers who do a substantial trade in shoes.

- 10 Fashion retailers tend to have a large front of store and small back of store area and have limited space in which to store bulky items such as shoe boxes. This is not the case with dedicated shoe retailers who tend to have a large back of store area and a relatively small front of store selling area. The style of selling in fashion retailers is also rather different from
- 15 that of ordinary shoe shops and it relies on a retailer displaying all styles of shoe on display for self service purchasing by the customer. A further point is that any packaging may be taxable, and this being based upon the weight that goes through the retail supply chain system, and a certain percentage of all that packaging requires to be recovered and recycled.
- 20 Shoe boxes are rather bulky and difficult to store whether full or empty. Furthermore, throughout the supply chain, from the factory to the retail outlet, shoe boxes are not cost-effective because of the large volume of empty space which each box contains in addition to the footwear.

Thus, conventional packaging has certain disadvantages. In particular since the boxes are of a standard uniform size a great deal of space is

wasted which can lead to storage and transport problems. Secondly, such boxes do not readily lend themselves to a convenient display of the goods they contain at the point of sale.

It is an object of the present invention to provide footwear packaging
5 which alleviates these disadvantages.

According to the present invention there is provided a footwear package comprising a flexible bag or bag-like container of which at least a front is light-transmitting, closure means for closing the container, and means for locating items of footwear within the container.

10 Such a package has a number of advantages. Because at least a front of the container transmits light, the container may be easily displayed and footwear within it can be inspected by a prospective purchaser. Because the container is flexible, it takes up very little more room than that occupied by the footwear enclosed.

15 Preferably, the closure means includes one or more formations by which the bag may be suspended from a display rack. This facilitates display at the point of sale of the footwear contained.

The footwear locating means may be constituted by a piece of card which may be folded as appropriate and which may carry various kinds of
20 information, for example information such as a name and/or trademark indicating the origin of the goods, and/or information relating to the size of the footwear. In some preferred embodiments, such locating means is constituted as a dividing member adapted to run generally diagonally or laterally of the bag or like container to separate the individual items of
25 footwear contained thereby.

The bag or like container may be formed as an integral piece, for example by forming a tube of a synthetic polymeric material such as polyethylene, polyvinyl chloride or polypropylene and cutting and sealing it at intervals to form the bags. In such a case the whole bag will be light-transmitting.

5 In other embodiments the bag or like container is formed from a front transparent cover sheet, for example of polyvinyl chloride, viscose film such as Cellophane™ or polypropylene, and an opaque rear sheet for example of paper.

The container may be suitably provided with a hook or an opening by which it may be suspended from an appropriately shaped display rack.

10 Such hook or opening may be formed in the closure means as such, or in a tab which is secured to the closure means.

The closure means may be of card, and may be printed with various kinds of information, or it may bear a separate adhesive label carrying such

15 information. The information may be in the form of or include a barcode containing information for stock control and pricing purposes.

The closure means of the container may take various forms. In one embodiment, such closure means is simply a sheet of card folded to embrace the mouth of the container and stapled in place. In another

20 embodiment, the closure means is formed by two polymeric components which are adapted to snap fit together and which are shaped to form a handle. One such component may be secured by fusion or adhesive bonding to each lip of the mouth of the container.

In other preferred embodiments of the invention, a closure comprises a

25 foldable member comprising a pair of flaps defining at least one channel for receiving lips of a mouth of the bag or like container, an adjunct strip foldably connected to a first such flap so that the other flap may be folded

inside the adjunct strip with such other flap and the folded lips of the bag trapped between the first flap and the adjunct strip, said first flap and said adjunct strip being provided with co-operating integral formations for securing the closure in closed condition.

- 5 Such a closure may be neat and secure and it enables the use of staples to be avoided. Staples can present a hazard to the unwary when opening a package secured by them. Such a closure also avoids the necessity of forming two complementary plastics mouldings for forming a handle. Also, the difficulty in separating materials for subsequent recycling is
10 avoided.

Preferably, such adjunct strip has extension wings at each end which are foldable around the ends of the first flap and attachable thereto to hold the closure in closed condition.

- Such extension wings are preferably attachable to the first flap by means
15 of co-operating tabs and slots. Such tabs may be provided on the extension wings or on the first flap, the co-operating slots, of course, being provided on the other such member. When the tabs are provided on the extension wings, it is preferred that such tabs point away from the end of such wings. When the tabs are provided on the first flap, they
20 preferably point towards the centre line of the container.

In preferred embodiments of such a closure, hook or loop means is provided attached to or integral with the first flap for suspending the container from a display rack. Such a hook or loop may be arranged to project across the adjunct strip until the closure is folded for use.

- 25 Advantageously, the closure is of **M**-section in that the first and second flaps are interconnected by a **V**-section adapted to penetrate the mouth of

the bag or like container so that lips of the mouth are sandwiched to either side of the **V**-section between the **V**-section and one or other of the flaps

The invention extends to a said package containing footwear.

Preferred embodiments of the invention will now be described, by way of example only, and with reference to the accompanying diagrammatic drawings in which:

Figures 1 to 5 show different stages in the closing of a footwear container in accordance with the invention using one preferred form of closure;

Figure 6 illustrates that closure in flat form;

Figure 7 shows an embodiment of a footwear container using a second form of closure and a first form of locating means;

Figure 8 illustrates a second form of locating means prior to insertion into a container, and

Figure 9 illustrates a further form of closure.

Referring now to Figures 1 to 6, a closure 1 for a bag 2 or like container having a mouth 3 with flexible lips 4 has a pair of flaps 5, 6 which are foldable to define at least one channel 7 for receiving the lips 4 of the mouth 3 of the bag, and an adjunct strip 8 at a fold-line 9.

In the illustrated embodiment, the first and second flaps 5, 6 are joined by intermediate strips 10, 11 so that those flaps and strips can be folded together in zig-zag manner to form an **M**-section. The strips 10, 11 thus form a **V**-section with a channel 7 to each side of it. If the **V**-section is

inserted into the mouth 3 of the container, the lips 4 of that mouth will enter one into each channel 7, as shown in Figure 1. These strips and flaps are then held together, as shown in Figure 2, and folded down against the adjunct strip 8 so that the second flap 6 is folded inside the adjunct strip 8 with that flap and the intervening strips 10, 11 and the folded lips 4 of the bag trapped between the first flap 5 and the adjunct strip 8, as shown in Figures 3 and 4. Figure 4 also illustrates how any protruding corners of the bag may at this stage be tucked into the closure.

The adjunct strip 8 is provided with extension wings 12 at each end, and each of these is provided with a tab 13 which can be inserted in an opening 14 in the first flap 5 when the flaps and strips of the closure are concertinaed and folded together and the extension wings 12 are folded around the end of the closure to hold it fastened.

A base 15 of a hook 16 is attached to the inner face of the first strip 5 so that the hook projects through a slot 17 along the fold-line 9 and overlies the adjunct strip 8 until the closure is folded about the fold line 9 when it will stand proud of the closure and can be used to hang the closed bag from a display rack.

Figure 7 illustrates a shoe container having a different form of closure. In Figure 7 one of a pair of shoes 20 is masked by a shoe locating device 21 formed of card folded to form a trapezoidal, rectangular-section tube into which the masked shoe is inserted. The two shoes and the locating device are inserted into a flexible bag or like container 22 and this is closed by a closure 23 which in this instance is simply a piece of card folded in two and held together by staples (not shown).

The shoe locating device 21 may be constituted as an open-ended tube. It may be a sheet of card folded two, three or four times to enclose the

hidden shoe just on three sides, or even folded once to form a front and a separator portion keeping the two shoes apart. The exposed front of the locating device may appropriately be printed with sales promotion material.

- 5 It will be appreciated that any other suitable method of securing the closure in the closed condition may be used if desired. In particular, a closure as shown in Figures 1 to 6 may be used.

A shoe 20 and the shoe locating device 21 are visible through a light transmitting (preferably transparent) front panel of the container 22. A
10 slot 42 is provided in the closure for hanging the container from a display rack.

Figure 8 illustrates an alternative form of locating device 25, which may be used for packaging boots assembled head-to-toe. This locating device comprises a backing sheet 26 having end flaps 27 which may be folded up
15 against soles 28 of a pair of boots 29. A retaining hoop 30 is provided to hold the boots 29 against the backing sheet 26. The assembly shown in Figure 8 may be bagged and the bag closed as otherwise described.

Figure 9 illustrates a further form of bag closure which may be adopted.

In Figure 9, one of a pair of members forming a bag closure is illustrated
20 and it comprises a strip 31 which may be sealed to a bag or like container 32 by welding or adhesive. The strip 31 is formed with a loop 33 which may serve either to support the container from a display stand, or as a carry handle. A hole 34 and a stud 35 are provided for co-operating with a stud and a hole respectively of a second such member forming a closure.

- 25 Since the bag is flexible, it is easily collapsed, and accordingly significant space savings may be achieved. Advantageously, the footwear package of

the present invention weighs significantly less than a corresponding size of shoe box and significant savings result in packaging waste recovery costs.